

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (previously presented) A method for intervertebral stabilization, comprising:
 - accessing a disc space between vertebral bodies;
 - delivering an expandable device into the disc space in an unexpanded condition;
 - expanding the expandable device with an expandable element to distract the disc space, said expandable element being a balloon and said expanding including inflating said balloon with fluid;
 - deflating said balloon and removing said balloon from said expandable device and said disc space; and
 - placing a motion preserving device in a cavity of the expanded expandable device.
2. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein accessing the disc space includes accessing the disc space from a posterior approach.
3. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein accessing the disc space includes accessing the disc space from an anterior approach.
4. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein accessing the disc space includes accessing the disc space from a posterior-lateral approach.
5. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein accessing the disc space includes accessing the disc space from a lateral approach.

6. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising mounting the expandable device on a distal portion of a delivery instrument before delivering the expandable device.
7. (original) The method of claim 6, wherein the distal portion includes the expandable element, and expanding the expandable device includes placing polymerizable material in the expandable element.
8. (original) The method of claim 7, placing the motion preserving device includes curing the polymerizable material in the expandable element.
9. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein expanding the expandable device includes inflating the expandable element.
10. (original) The method of claim 9, further comprising mounting the expandable device on the expandable element with the expandable element in a deflated condition before delivering the expandable device.
11. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein expanding the expandable device includes moving a first portion and a second portion of the expandable device away from one another into contact with an endplate of an adjacent one of the vertebral bodies.

12. (original) The method of claim 11, wherein the first portion and second portion are substantially rigid.

13. (original) The method of claim 12, wherein the first portion and the second portion include bone engaging features along outer surfaces thereof.

14. (original) The method of claim 11, wherein the first portion and the second portion extend between a proximal end and a distal end of the expandable device, and when expanded the first portion and second portion form a first height adjacent the distal end and a second height adjacent the proximal end, one of the first and second heights being greater than the other of the first and second heights.

15. (original) The method of claim 14, further comprising orienting the greater one of the first and second heights anteriorly in the disc space.

16. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the vertebral bodies comprise a concavely curved portion of a scoliotic spinal column segment, and the disc space includes a collapsed height along one side of a midline of the spinal column segment, and expanding the expandable device restores the collapsed disc space and reduces the scoliotic curvature of the concavely curved portion.

17. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

temporarily supporting the disc space with the expanded expandable device before placing the motion preserving device; and

removing load supporting elements of the expanded expandable device to transfer spinal column loads to the motion preserving device.

18. (withdrawn) The method of claim 17, wherein removing load supporting elements includes degrading the load support elements in situ.

19. (original) A method for intervertebral distraction, comprising:

accessing a collapsed disc space between vertebral bodies;

mounting an expandable device on an expandable element at a distal portion of a delivery instrument;

delivering the expandable device into the disc space in an unexpanded condition with the delivery instrument;

expanding the expandable device by expanding the expandable element to restore a disc space height;

removing the expandable element from the expanded expandable device; and

maintaining the restored disc space height with the expanded expandable device.

20. (original) The method of claim 19, further comprising placing bone filler material in the expanded expandable device.

21. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein the expandable element is positioned in a cavity defined between first and second portions of the expandable device.
22. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein the expandable element includes an interior inflatable with fluid.
23. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein accessing the disc space includes accessing the disc space from an approach selected from the group consisting of: anterior, lateral, posterior-lateral, and posterior surgical approaches.
24. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein expanding the expandable device includes moving a first portion and a second portion of the expandable device away from one another.
25. (original) The method of claim 24, wherein the first portion and second portion are substantially rigid.
26. (original) The method of claim 24, wherein first portion and second portion each extend between a proximal end and a distal end of the expandable device, and when expanded the first portion and second portion are separated by a first height adjacent the distal end and a second height adjacent the proximal end, one of the first and second heights being greater than the other of the first and second heights.

27. (original) The method of claim 26, wherein the expandable device is tapered between the distal and proximal ends when expanded.

28. (withdrawn) The method of claim 26, wherein the expandable device includes a stepped configuration between the proximal and distal ends when expanded.

29. (withdrawn) The method of claim 19, wherein the expandable device includes a width that is substantially the same in the expanded and unexpanded conditions.

30. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein the expandable device is radially expandable.

31. (withdrawn) The method of claim 19, wherein delivering the expandable device includes orienting a convexly curved anterior wall along an anterior portion of the disc space.

32. (withdrawn) The method of claim 31, wherein the expanded expandable device includes a D shape.

33. (original) The method of claim 19, further comprising:
positioning a motion preserving device in the expanded expandable device; and
removing load supporting elements of the expanded expandable device to transfer spinal column loads to the motion preserving device.

34. (withdrawn) The method of claim 33, wherein removing load supporting elements includes degrading the load support elements in situ.

35-71. (cancelled)

72. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising delivering a second expandable device in the form of a high-pressure inelastic balloon and placing polymerizable material in said balloon, said second expandable device and said polymerizable material being at least part of said motion preserving device.

73. (previously presented) The method of claim 16, wherein said delivering the expandable device includes placing said expandable device to said one side of said midline.